

## Parting Thoughts

As I look over this report, I realize I've only discussed education, health care and senior issues. I'm also actively working to provide public safety, assist the truly needy and protect our environment. If you'd like more information about any issues of interest to you, please contact my office and I'll get you the information.

**Getting help** from state government can sometimes be a frustrating experience. If you have problems dealing with a state agency, please feel free to contact me.

District Office: (253) 566-5739 at 4109 Bridgeport Way West, Suite D-1, University Place, WA 98466

Toll-free: 1-800-562-6000

Home: (253) 564-9779

## Town halls

Please join Rep. Carrell and me at a Town Hall Meeting. We'd love to personally answer your questions.

### Thursday, July 22

7 p.m.

Lakewood Library  
6300 Wildaire

### Saturday, July 24

10 a.m.

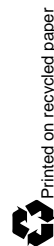
University Place Senior Center  
27th & Grandview  
(former parks building in University Place)

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## News & Views '99 Session Report

State Representative  
**GIGI TALCOTT**

PO Box 40600  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600



## 28th District News & Views '99 Session Report

from your State Representative  
**Gigi Talcott**



July 1999

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Summer is here. Rain or shine, isn't Washington a wonderful place to work and play?

My work representing you in Olympia was especially challenging this year. In November, voters elected exactly the same number (49) of Republicans and Democrats to the House of Representatives. Every committee had two co-chairs taking turns running the meetings. Understandably, that scenario created both agreements and stalemates. Fortunately my co-chair, Rep. Dave Quall, D-Mount Vernon, and I were able to steer clear of partisan bickering.

Here's a short recap of some of 1999's major issues. I read everyone's letters, listened to the calls and took your concerns to heart. Call me anytime, write me or stop by to talk about issues that are important to you. I'll always value your advice as I work for you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

*Gigi Talcott*  
Gigi Talcott

(253) 566-5739

4109 Bridgeport Way West  
Suite D-1  
University Place, WA 98466

Toll-free Legislative Hotline  
(800) 562-6000





## EDUCATION

*I believe where classrooms are safe, expectations are high, teachers have the necessary tools to teach and parents are involved, all students will succeed. Here's what we did this year.*



Rep. Talcott sharing the gavel with Education Committee Co-chair Dave Quall.

### School Safety

With school shootings in the news, parents and grandparents have called me to say they expect their children to be safe in school. I agree. This year the Education Committee and the Judiciary Committee (with Rep. Mike Carrell as co-chair) continued to improve school safety in Washington state.

- Students who possess dangerous weapons or otherwise pose a threat must immediately be removed from school. Then local authorities will hold and monitor or counsel the students.
- We added \$6 million for local school districts to establish alternative schools for students who are disruptive, violent or have dropped out. This will give thousands of teenagers a place to successfully earn their diploma or GED and help restore order to our "normal" classrooms.
- We allowed local police officers to confidentially share information about unlawful students with teachers and school officials. Now teachers and principals can be alerted to potential problems before they happen.

### Quality Teachers

Parents also expect that their children will have teachers who know their subjects well. I believe it's time to begin testing teachers. I support the State Board of Education's proposal to require college students entering a teacher preparation program to demonstrate their basic academic skills. Then, when they have completed their college classes, they would be required to demonstrate competency in the subjects and skills necessary to be a successful classroom teacher. Do you agree that teachers should be tested? I'd love to hear your ideas.

We must also support our teachers and have done that. This year we provided more time for training and a healthy salary increase for all school employees, especially beginning teachers.

### Accountability

We're continuing to raise expectations on all students and staff in our public schools. Higher standards are now in place. Testing with both the old multiple choice basic skills test, and the state's new applied skills test are required in third, fourth, sixth, seventh, and soon in ninth and 10th grade. With over 11,000 taxpayer-supported hours in school, these 17 hours of testing will give us an overall check on how our students and staff are doing. A new Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission will help us move forward to hold students and staff accountable for results. In addition to individual student report cards, parents and the community will receive an annual report card on the success or failure of their neighborhood schools. Where there's success, let's copy it. Where there's failure, let's fix it. Agree?

### Certificate of Academic Proficiency

Did anyone ever ask you to actually demonstrate that you'd learned the skills necessary to earn your diploma? I'm working so every student in Washington's public schools will be required to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, math and science before graduating from high school. Students, parents and teachers will know by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade whether the student is on a smooth path for graduation. If not, students will still have two years to get back on course to join their class on commencement day. My legislation, SHB 1674, will define and establish a timeline for the Certificate of Academic Proficiency (CAP). The old cliché that students can't read their diplomas would then no longer be true. Wouldn't that be great?!

## HEALTH CARE

It's outrageous that in 17 of the 39 counties in Washington state, no individuals or families can get any private health care insurance. Fortunately, Pierce County is not one of them - yet. But our health care costs are high and our choices are limited.

- I believe that government rules and mandates intended to make health insurance more accessible have actually contributed to making it less available.
- We rejected the deal Governor Locke worked out behind closed doors with CEO's of three major insurance companies which would have given them a virtual monopoly.

But the problem's still here. I'm convinced we need more, not less competition. When companies compete for customers, customers benefit. The work continues.

Another problem is that many seniors have been left without access to some comprehensive Medicare supplement package. We resolved that by passing a new law to allow seniors to purchase a Medigap policy of their choosing should they lose access to their current health plan.

I appreciate the "very big thank you" for my willingness to listen and work to improve the quality of care for older and disabled adults in Pierce County. This year we lowered case loads from 100:1 to 85:1. The Legislature used your tax dollars to provide a 50-cent-per-hour raise annually for home care workers. Hopefully, this will help keep caregivers on the job. These struggling workers often become family to our friends and neighbors needing care.

I've proposed removing the sales tax from over-the-counter medications, just like prescription medication. This proposal was not given a hearing. What do you think?

### Senior Tax Relief

I also supported legislation to put a 2% per year limit on the assessment increase on the home of a senior citizen. Any additional increase would be deferred until the home was sold. Unfortunately, this bill was not even granted a hearing. What do you think of the idea?